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Consumer Advocates Announce Launch of Telephone Assistance Programs Website

Silver Spring, MD – February 7, 2006 – The National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA), in partnership with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), announces the launching of www.lifeline.gov, a website for consumers and assistance agencies to learn about the telephone assistance programs Lifeline and Link-Up.

Lifeline is a program that allows income eligible consumers to receive local telephone service at a discounted monthly rate. The discount is at least \$5-6 a month and can be more depending on state and telephone service provider regulations. Income eligible consumers can use Link-UP to establish local telephone service with reduced installation or activation charges. Consumers are typically eligible for these programs if their annual household income is at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty level.

“We are pleased consumers and agencies will have one central location to access information about the Lifeline and Link-Up programs,” said John Perkins, president of NASUCA. “With an increase in the number of consumers losing access to their telephone service due, in part, to lower incomes, it is now more important than ever to reach out and educate these consumers about these programs in order to get them connected again.”

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In 2005, a group of state and federal agencies joined to form “Lifeline Across America” and examine ways to promote Lifeline and Link-Up and lower the number of households without telephone service. Approximately 8.7 million households were without telephone service in 2005. Suggestions for increasing awareness of the programs were solicited from utility regulators and advocates, industry experts and consumers.

For today's press release from the FCC and other news about the FCC, go to www.fcc.gov. For today's press release from NARUC and other news about NARUC, go to www.naruc.org.

About NASUCA

The National NASUCA is an association of 45 advocate offices. Members are designated by the laws of their respective jurisdictions to represent the interests of utility consumers before state and federal regulators and in the courts.